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14 September 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR: James A. Cunningham, Jr.
Acting Assistant Director, OSA

SUBJECT : CORONA vs. COMOR

1. I have witnessed, as I am sure you have, that the congenial group known as OSA has a definite split personality which it can assume for one role or another to suit its own immediate needs.
2. How often have you heard, during the CORONA briefings, that we did not do one thing or another because COMOR had not designated it as a priority target at the time that the sanctified program was cut? By so stating, we would seem to convey the impression that we are chained, programwise, to the dictates of the COMOR. In fact, and if I understand the facts of life around here, this is the way it should be.
3. Yet in violation of this way of life, we in OSA, and at times upon the urging of Dr. Scoville, will unilaterally cut passes into the CORONA program which have not received the blessing of COMOR. To wit: We began fudging a little bit when we would sneak the so-called engineering pass in over [redacted]. We could easily placate our conscience because the pass would not consume too great a quantity of film. Having taken that step, we can now cut in other passes, unilaterally, such as we have done over Cuba to the tune of some six passes in the next COR shot. There is even talk at this very moment to slip in some over Korea.
4. Granted that we have covered our tracks occasionally by advising Reber of what we have done. Reber cannot really speak for the Group, and maybe someone might feel that a pass over his pet target is just as important as a pass over ours.

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5. What I am getting at is that unless we are most attentive to walking the straight and narrow when it comes to targeting by following the dictates and requirements of COMOR and not our own, then I suggest that decay can rapidly set in to our whole system re COMOR activity. In other words, what we are tacitly advocating, and in fact accomplishing, is that the guy who controls the program controls the targeting. Should someone's nose be out of joint over any of our unilateral targeting on CORONA, what will happen the day that we do not control the targeting of satellite operations but must wait our turn to submit our target requirements and hope that the operating agency be conscientious enough to cover them?

6. I realize that I have possibly blown this far out of proportion, but I think the thread of corruption is there and should not be woven to a great pattern by our own indulgence. Amen.

SIGNED
JOHN N. McMAHON
Executive Officer, OSA

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